R. HALL. 11 ALMOND GROVE.

"CAMBRIDGESHIRE in the 1980's"

An outline of the Draft County Structure Plan

FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION PLEASE WRITE OR RING THE COUNTY
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INTRODUCTION

The Structure Plan is a new form of County development plan concerned with the broad pattern of physical development over the next 15 years or so. It consists of a Written Statement setting out policies and proposals with the reasoning behind them, and a Report of Survey giving more detailed information upon which the plan is based.

The plan will influence the number and location of new jobs, the rate of population increase, and the location of new housing, roads, shops and public services. It will not show individual sites for development, but it will provide a framework for the more detailed planning in local plans and development control decisions and for investment plans by public and private agencies responsible for providing facilities and services in the County.

The plan does not present an idealist view of the future, but is based upon an assessment of the resources likely to be available. Although it looks ahead for about 15 years, it is not a once and for all document, but will be a basis for monitoring and, where necessary, changing policies as circumstances require.

A draft Written Statement has now been accepted by the County Council as a basis for consultations, and this booklet summarises the main policies and proposals of the document.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Preliminary work on the plan included the collection of information on trends, needs and problems in Cambridgeshire, and surveys to find out what people thought about the issues that the plan should deal with. The fundamental questions were :

- At what rate should the population of Cambridgeshire increase ?
- Where should growth and change take place ?

To help answer these questions the County Council considered alternative ways in which the County could develop over the next fifteen years, and examined in more detail the planning problems facing Cambridge and its surrounding rural area. (This work is reported in the publications listed on the last page).

As a result of these studies and careful consideration of the reaction to them from a wide range of public bodies, organisations and individuals in the County, the County Council adopted a set of guidelines for the development of a strategy in December 1976. It was agreed that the main aims of the plan would be :

- to ensure that there would be sufficient jobs, services and facilities for the people of Cambridgeshire and their children without encouraging more people to move into the County.
- to improve the quality of life in those parts of the County and for those sections of the community who are least well served at present.
- to protect high quality farmland and slow down the consumption of other non-renewable resources particularly energy.
- to conserve and improve the environment of the County's towns, villages and countryside.

These aims laid the foundation of the strategy. The examination of alternative strategies had indicated which policies would be most likely to achieve such aims. The next stage therefore was to define the policies in more detail and to work out what they would mean in terms of numbers and location of jobs, houses and services.

THE STRATEGY

The main elements of this strategy are summarised below.

Major Constraints

Two major factors have limited the scope of the plan: finance and existing commitments, particularly outstanding planning permissions.

In the short term, at least, shortage of public money will limit the scope for new policies. It is, therefore, important for Structure Plan to ensure that best use is made of existing investment and that new investment is allocated according to clearly defined priorities.

There are many outstanding planning permissions, particularly for housing in the County. Thus development will continue in many settlements for several years and new policies controlling the scale and location of growth may not have much effect before 1981.

The Rate of Growth

A major principle of the strategy is to slow down the rate of growth in the County below that experienced in recent years. This is important for several reasons: to keep down County Council expenditure, making it more feasible to improve or at least maintain services to people already here; to slow down the loss of good agricultural land; and to reduce the adverse effects on the environment of rapid new development and increasing volumes of traffic.

The rate of growth is determined partly by the natural increase of people already in the County, and partly by new people moving in to take up available jobs and houses. The plan will restrain growth by controlling development of new jobs and houses. If these policies are successful, it is expected that the population in the County will increase from 563,000 in 1976 to about 690,000 in 1991 - a significantly slower rate of increase than over the previous fifteen years.

Employment

There has been rapid growth of jobs in the County in recent years due partly to the planned expansion schemes at Huntingdon and St Neots and Peterborough New Town, and partly to the economic attractiveness of places like Cambridge. There has also been considerable change in the type of employment, with a decline in the agricultural jobs and a fast growth in services. Unemployment in the County as a whole has stayed well below national levels, but with considerable variations; unemployment rates are particularly low in the Cambridge area and very high in the Fens.

The policies are designed to ensure that there are adequate job opportunities for local people and their children, without encouraging migration into the County. To do this promotional measures are proposed to attract more jobs to the areas of highest unemployment, balanced by restrictions on development by new firms where this would attract large numbers of workers from outside the County. The Peterborough New Town Programme will continue to be supported and in Cambridge the policies will allow for the introduction of some new industries to widen local job opportunities. Throughout the County it is expected that there will be little need to restrict the expansion of existing firms, except where this would cause severe environmental problems.

Between 1961 and 1976 the population grew by 27% but the housing stock increased by 45%, owing largely to the fall in average household size. This trend is expected to continue and, together with the need to replace substandard dwellings and accommodate new people, means that about 67,000 dwellings will be needed between 1976 and 1991.

Housing

The policies seek to ensure that future house building produces a greater range of sizes and types to cater for differing needs and preferences and to avoid monotonous residential areas. Although generally the trend towards higher densities will be accepted, local plans will allow for development at a variety of densities to suit differing needs. The policies will seek to retain housing within inner areas of towns and encourage improvement of older houses and their neighbourhoods rather than redevelopment.

Settlement Pattern

Over recent years, houses have been built in a wide range of towns and villages, often without new jobs. The character of many villages has changed as a result of new estates for commuters and journeys to work have become longer. This is especially so in the Cambridge area where house building in the City has been restricted, and commuting into the City has aggravated traffic congestion.

The new settlement policies will promote a more concentrated pattern with most new houses in the towns – along with the additional jobs needed. A concentrated rather than dispersed pattern was chosen for several reasons: to keep down the capital costs of providing services, such as sewerage and water, and the running costs of services such as health, fire and rescue; to shorten journeys to work, shops and other facilities, and thus to conserve energy; and to provide a better basis for maintaining public transport services.

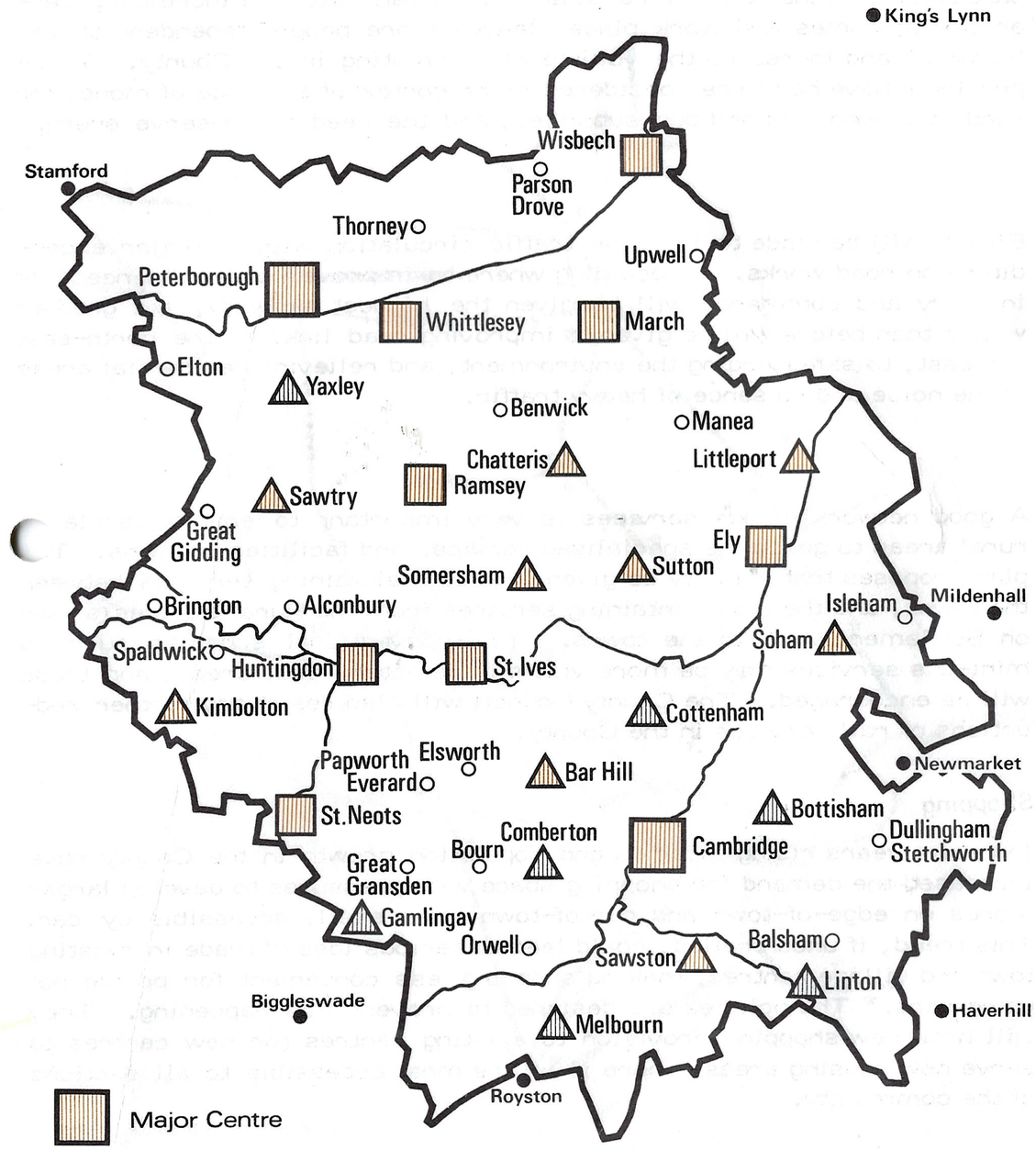
A few well situated large villages with a range of services will also take some growth of housing and jobs giving a choice of places to live and work. These are called the Key Rural Centres with growth (see Map opposite). In all other settlements, housing development will be restricted to small groups of dwellings or single plots.

Although most new housing and jobs will be located in larger settlements, the County Council is concerned to maintain and where possible improve services for those people who will continue to live in small villages. The Rural Centres will be focal points for local services, including public transport; in particular the Minor Rural Centres are chosen to ensure that basic services are maintained in the least well-served parts of the County.

Transport

Rapid population increase and greater use of cars (without comparable investment in new roads) have led to overloading on many of the County's roads, causing delays, accidents and environmental problems. Poor road links to the Fens may have contributed to the difficulties in attracting new jobs to the area.

SETTLEMENT



Major Centre

Market town

Key Rural Centre: with growth

Key Rural Centre: no growth

Minor Rural Centre

Bus services in the County have been declining due to rising operating costs and increasing car use, causing difficulties for people without cars, particularly in the remoter rural areas. Meanwhile, the increasing separation of homes and work places leaves more people dependent on car transport and increases the volume of commuting in the County. These problems have had to be considered in the context of shortage of money for road improvements and bus subsidies, and the need to conserve energy.

Efforts will be made to improve traffic circulation without major expenditure on road works. In deciding where to improve roads, the needs of industry and commerce will be given the highest priority, but greater weight than before will be given to improving road links to the north-east and east, to safeguarding the environment, and relieving residential areas of the noise and nuisance of heavy traffic.

A good network of bus services is very important to enable people in rural areas to get to the specialised services and facilities in towns. The plan proposes that priority be given first to maintaining services between the towns, and then to maintaining services from the Rural Centres (shown on Settlement Map) to the towns. Non-conventional schemes such as mini-bus services may be more viable in remoter rural areas, and these will be encouraged. The County Council will also resist any further reductions of rail services in the County.

Shopping

In recent years rising incomes and population growth in the County have increased the demand for shopping space with pressures to develop larger stores on edge-of-town and out-of-town sites easily accessible by car. This trend, if uncontrolled, could lead to serious loss of trade in existing town and village centres, making shopping less convenient for people not using cars. The policies are designed to prevent this happening. They will limit new shopping provision to existing centres (or new centres to serve new housing areas) where it will be most accessible to all sections of the community.

TRANSPORT

Public Services

The plan will provide guidance to agencies responsible for essential public services in the County, including water supply, electricity, sewerage and sewage disposal, and health facilities. It will help them to plan their investment to ensure that services are provided when and where they are needed as economically as possible.

Many people will remain in small rural communities with poor bus services, and the County Council is concerned about their access to basic community services. It welcomes, for example, the Health Authorities' ideas for more local health care, and favours decentralisation of other services where economically possible.

The plan will also be a framework for planning County Council services: education, social services, library facilities, police, fire and rescue, and waste disposal. School provision must be directly related to the locat of population, and the settlement policies have taken into account, among other things, the need to keep down costs of providing new school buildings and school transport.

Agriculture and Minerals

Cambridgeshire has some of the richest farmland in the country and agriculture is its major industry. By keeping down the rate of growth in the county the plan will reduce the loss of good agricultural land. Much development will still take place and care will be taken to ensure that wherever practicable this uses lower quality farm land and does not disrupt viable farm units.

The County Council will prepare a Minerals Subject Plan to guide the extraction of minerals in the County. This will be drawn up within the context of policies to ensure that workings avoid best quality farmland, areas of best landscape, wildlife or archaeological interest, and do not harm water supplies. Planning conditions will require workings to be restored to a suitable after-use.

The Environment

The pressures of man's activities on the environment continually increase: new houses, factories, shops and roads, changes in farming practice, mineral extraction and the demands of outdoor recreation all affect our towns, villages and countryside.

ENVIRONMENT

Public funds for conservation will continue to be limited (at least in the early years of the plan period) but the County Council will encourage local self help and seek grants from all available sources.

In the countryside, the settlement policies will help to contain the impact of urban development, and development control will require buildings to be carefully sited and well designed. Particular effort will be made to increase the number of trees in the County, and preserve areas of wild-life and archaeological importance.

In the towns and villages the restrained rate of growth should ease pressures for redevelopment and slow down the increase in traffic. The local authorities will continue to conserve buildings of historic and architectural interest, and will promote 'town schemes' to gain the benefits of grant aid for preserving groups of buildings.

Recreation and Tourism

Scope for informal recreation in the country is limited in Cambridgeshire, with so much land devoted to arable farming. The County's waterways and disused mineral workings are particularly valuable, but they need to be planned to allow fuller use and avoid conflicts.

The plan proposes a fuller study of recreational needs and possibilities. In the meantime maximum use will be made of existing facilities, and the County Council will favour new projects which widen opportunities without damaging the environment.

More and more tourists are visiting Cambridgeshire. In particular, the numbers of foreign visitors to Cambridge City has continued to grow bringing valuable foreign currency, but worsening congestion in the historic centre. There is a shortage of lower priced hotel and guest-house accommodation in Cambridge and Ely and a demand for more self-catering accommodation in the County generally, and the plan allows for some expansion of these facilities. Tourism will be encouraged in parts of the County, such as Wisbech, Ely and Peterborough, but in Cambridge the emphasis will be on management rather than promotion.

SUBDIVISIONS of COUNTY

WHAT THE PLAN MEANS FOR YOUR AREA

Different parts of the County have different needs and problems and to take account of these it was divided into five sub-areas (see Map "Sub-divisions of the County"). The main policies and proposals for each sub-area are summarised below.

Fens Sub Area

- Finance job promotion in Wisbech and March
- Most new development in Wisbech and March : some in Chatteris
- Support CoSIRA in promoting small businesses
- Improve County roads particularly A141 – the "Fen Link Road"
- Urge government to bring forward plans to improve A47 between Peterborough and Kings Lynn
- Maintain or improve services
- Urge Health Authorities to retain hospital facilities at Wisbech and Doddington
- Improve substandard dwellings
- Support development of port at Wisbech and rail freight depot at March
- Promote tourism at Wisbech
- Protect high quality agricultural land

Peterborough Sub Area

- Develop New Town according to revised Master Plan
- Promote jobs in manufacturing and services in Peterborough
- Support New Town's sub regional functions
- Allow limited growth of jobs and houses at Whittlesey : and small scale industry at Yaxley
- Generally restrict development elsewhere
- Financial support and traffic management to improve bus circulation in Peterborough
- Continue to provide cycleways in Peterborough
- Improve rather than redevelop older housing in the City
- Conserve historic core of Peterborough
- Promote tourism in the City
- Support Nene Park, and develop country park at Water Newton when funds permit
- Prepare local plan for after-use of clay pits, including land for longer-term growth of City

Ouse Valley Sub Area

- Allow sufficient development of jobs and houses for local needs without encouraging migration
- Some industrial development at Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives; on a smaller scale at Sawtry and Somersham, and at Kimbolton.
- Restrict development by new firms bringing in large proportion of labour
- Finance job promotion in Ramsey
- Encourage office development at Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives
- Support A1-M1 link, and urge government to bring forward plans for St Neots bypass
- Provide relief road and new river bridge at St Ives and new road bridge over railway at Huntingdon
- Conserve town centres, particularly St Ives
- Develop country park at Hinchingbrooke when funds permit

East Cambs Sub Area

- Finance job promotion in Ely and support Suffolk's proposals for job growth in Newmarket
- Support CoSIRA in promoting small businesses elsewhere
- Most new houses and jobs in Ely with minor growth at Littleport, Soham and Sutton
- Improve A142 from Newmarket to Fens
- Maintain or improve services
- Urge Health Authorities to retain hospital services at Newmarket and Ely
- Safeguard character of Ely
- Encourage tourism especially in Ely

Cambridge Sub Area

- Slow down rate of growth
- Most new development in or close to City: allowing for additional 5,000 people in the Milton area, 3,000 at Bar Hill, and smaller developments at Sawston, Hardwick and Histon/Impington between 1981-1991
- Allow some new industries to increase job choice
- Tight controls on new offices especially in inner City
- Allow for development needs of University
- Limited road improvements in City : priority to improve key junctions and outer route on east side of City
- Better provision for cyclists
- Extend bus services to new developments in or close to City
- Allow minor extension of shopping in central area with most new floorspace in Kite area
- Conserve character of central Cambridge
- Allow expansion of tourist accommodation : control rather than expand tourism in City
- Provide country park at Milton Pits when funds permit
- Extend green belt to boundary with Hertfordshire

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

The Draft Written Statement is being sent to District and Parish Councils, other public bodies responsible for services in the County, neighbouring local authorities, and to a wide range of organisations within the County. It is available to all members of the public (see below).

The County Council is allowing three months for consultations. It will then amend the draft Written Statement in the light of all the responses, and the revised document - the Structure Plan - will be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment for his approval.

After submission the Structure Plan will be available for inspection at Council Offices and Public Libraries. The Secretary of State will consider objections in deciding whether to approve the plan, with or without modifications, or to reject it. Before doing so he will hold an inquiry (the "Examination in Public") at which those invited can discuss controversial issues.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Details of exhibitions and public meetings are given on a separate sheet. You can also buy the following documents from the County Planning Department, Shire Hall, Cambridge or consult them at your local library.

The Draft Written Statement Oct 1977 - £2.00p + 50p p & p

The Report of Survey Sept 1976 - £1.50p + 50p p & p

Supplement to the Report of Survey Nov 1977 - £0.50p inc. p & p

Report on Alternative Strategies Sept 1976 - £0.75p + 25p p & p

Consultation Report on Cambridge Sub-Area Jan 1977 £0.75p + 30p p & p

NOW FOR YOUR COMMENTS

If you have any comments to make on the proposals please do so either by writing a letter or by filling in a comment slip. Send it to the County Planning Officer or put it in a box at your local exhibition, public meeting or public library by 10 February 1978.